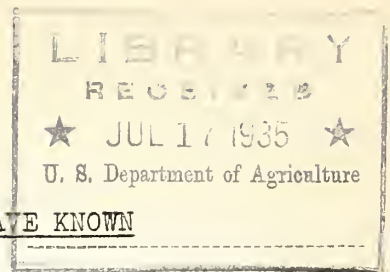


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SOME COMMUNITIES OF DISTINCTION I HAVE KNOWN

A radio talk by Dr. Charles J. Galpin, former Chief of the Division of Farm Population and Rural Life, delivered in the Home Demonstration Radio Hour, July 3, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 50 associate NBC radio stations.

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The American commonwealth of agriculture is more truly the six million families and homes on farms than the six million farms themselves. This is so, because the man on top of the land makes land into a farm; and because the family, on the one hand, creates the man that makes the farm; and the home with a woman at the helm, on the other hand, keeps the man manlike all the time he is the farmer.

But the family and the home, great as they are in themselves, would fall far short of their main purpose without the comfort and support of an enviroing community. So true is this that the commonwealth of agriculture, in a very real sense, may be thought of as a commonwealth of rural communities. And some of these communities are conspicuous by reason of a single distinctive feature. Let me tell you about one or two of these remarkable rural communities.

Who can forget that community of 700 farm homes whose merchants -- in the trading center of 2,500 people -- have entered into a conspiracy of friendship toward its farmer clientele? The conspirators plotted to provide farmers (which means farm women, of course) with just as standard goods as can be obtained anywhere; at prices matching the most seductive prices elsewhere. The personal service in stores and shops is intelligent and eager. Every farmer and his wife are made to feel at home. And every merchant has a pride in the farms and homes around him. This mercantile theory of economic friendliness does not stop with trade, but overflows into many exhibitions of rural friendship. An annual agricultural fair in town, a health program for farm children, a get-acquainted committee to make the school teachers of the little country schools have a good time in the community, a social center at the high school for farmers, their wives, and the children who will one day be members of the school, - these are some of the indirect activities flowing from the conspiracy of financial friendship. That community is on a solid foundation; and fortunate is the family that owns a farm there where the town understands the farmer, and the farmer has faith in the town.

I know a community of 300 farms in another state which has had a single church in its midst for a hundred years. But, what is far more to the point, this church has been shepherded year in and year out by a succession of educated and highly trained clergymen. Think what this has meant to these farm homes -- and especially to the women of these homes -- an adviser who has become thoroughly acquainted with the best spiritual thought and ideals of all the centuries; a man who is a real ambassador from the court of life as it should be here and from the court of life as it will be hereafter.

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The boys and girls of these farms have not grown up haphazard. They have had a friend in their pastor who knows the values of education, of music, of art, of good workmanship. And a hundred years under such spiritual guidance has left its mark in every family on every farm of this rare community.

In a distant State, I recall a group of 500 farms which, from its settlement in the early part of the nineteenth century, has maintained an academy, a school of higher education. Thirty farm men and women form its board of trustees. The greatest honor that can come to any person in this community is to be president of the board. Virtually all the children of these homes receive an education higher than that of the common school, and a goodly percentage go to college and university. The state agricultural college always has some young men and women from this community. For over a hundred years, the academy teachers have been trained in the colleges and universities of the land. They have been guides to thought, manners, and accomplishments. They have brought to the thresholds of these homes the best that has come down from the learning of all races. These farmers early put a business course in their academy; the women put in a music department, and an art department; and in 1902 an agricultural department was added, and a little later the women added a domestic science department. No pity need ever be spent on this community because it is rural; for it is in touch with the world.

I visited a community of farmers recently in Czechoslovakia, living in a village of 700 persons, their farms lying spread out about the village. I was greeted at the outskirts of the village by the mayor and twelve farmer aldermen. We first visited a cooperative bank. Then we went to a cooperative chicory mill; thence to a cooperative grist mill; to a cooperative bakery, where all the bread of the village is baked; to a beautiful cooperative bath house, where everybody bathed by schedule; to a cooperative social center house; to a cooperative fire department; and finally to a cooperative electric light plant. Here was as proud a little farm community as I ever saw. I am still thrilled by the single feature of cooperation in this little farm community of Sany, Czechoslovakia.

The commonwealth of agriculture, whether viewed as farms, homes, or communities, in my experience, rises or falls as friendships, faith, intelligence, mutual confidence, rise or fall among its members.

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